



CHALLENGES FACED BY VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS APPEARING FOR BOARD EXAMINATION

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ABSTRACT

The world is yet to be brighter for the visually impaired children. Visual impairment means being with low vision or no vision. The life and world of visually impaired children are totally different than those with vision. Braille language enables the visually impaired student to read and write in their schools. Talking library enables learning further. However, they face challenges in appearing for board examination. The researcher was interested in knowing the challenges faced by them and to find out strategies to overcome the challenges. The researcher adopted Explanatory Research design and Conative model of Mary Goodyear (2013) for Focused Group Discussion. The methodology adopted in conducting focused group discussion was based on Krueger and Casey's, (2000) model. The researcher selected samples from a particular school for the visually impaired in Madurai. By adopting census method, all the visually impaired students appearing for board examination were selected for the study. By using the focused group script, which is a tool for data collection, the challenges faced by the respondents were identified. They were exam fear, difficulty in recalling, particularly the steps and formula in Maths, no career guidance or lack of motivation, non – conducive family atmosphere, less number of revisions and exam preparation programs teaching mnemonics, and ill health of parents during examination. The researcher had suggested strategies to overcome challenges faced by the visually impaired students appearing for the board exam.

KEYWORDS: Visually Impaired, Board Examination, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Visual impairment, also known as vision impairment, is a medical definition primarily measured based on an individual's better eye visual acuity; in the absence of treatment such as correctable eyewear, assistive devices, and medical treatment - visual impairment may cause the individual difficulties with normal daily tasks including reading and walking. Students who are visually impaired include: students who are blind, have no vision or little potential for using vision; students who have low vision; students who have a visual impairment after best correction that adversely affects their educational performance. Exam Fear is a psychological condition in which people experience extreme distress and anxiety in testing situations. In situations where the pressure is on and a good performance counts, people can become so anxious that they are actually unable to do their best.

Nervousness, Tension, High expectations, lack of confidence, less preparation and anxiety are the Problems faced by students during examination. While an amount of stress may be beneficial, too much exam stress can cause individuals to perform poorly on tests that mean so much to them. Learning the causes of exam stress can help students to understand their emotions and to regulate their anxiety level. Major challenges identified include problems of funding, related assistive technology resources, relative limitations in learning, negative effects of technology on learning, health of students with visual impairments and false over- expectations by teachers. In this study the factors influencing exam difficulties among students

of a particular school for the visually impaired students were found out.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kristie Saumure and Lisa.M.G (2004) in their study on In-depth qualitative interviews conducted in order to examine the academic information behaviours of visually impaired undergraduates, with a focus on adaptive technology. Initial findings reveal that students' information behaviours are enhanced by technology, active support networks, and personal determination. The results also show that students struggle with time constraints, feelings of dependence, others' lack of understanding, and limitations on their access to electronic materials and to library.

Sanghamitra Mohanty and B Kumar Swain (2010) in their study on "Markov model based Oriya isolated speech recognizer-an emerging solution for visually impaired students in school and public examination, they have tried to focus on problems faced by visually impaired students of Orissa in school and public examinations and discussed the emerging solutions to those problems at the end order to minimize those problems. Visually impaired students can answer the question as normal student because they do not need at all their hand and eyes to respond the answer. As a result of which overcomes the problem faced by visually challenged people to answer the questions without help of keyboard.

A Khalid, et al., (2021) in their study on "Qualitative Study on

Challenges Faced by Students with Low Vision in Preparing for their Public Exams, Students with low vision often face problems during their academic careers. The study's main to identify the challenges faced by the students with low vision in preparing for their public exams. The researcher developed a semi- structured interview for data collection from students with low vision. The thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The present study revealed that the majority of the students' low vision had no access to learning material and supportive services. It was found that insufficient government support in terms of budget, inadequate policies, and built environments hinder students with low vision in preparing for their exams; hence, most respondents depend on others to complete their assignments. Also, non-supportive physical environments are adding much to their mobility issues. Participants' detailed description in this study will guide school administration, policymakers, examiners, services providers, and parents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the challenges faced by visually impaired students appearing for board examination.

Statement of the problem:

For visually challenged students the learning methodology is different from the normal students. Visually challenged students write the examination with the help of scribe. They face so many difficulties during the examination. This study aims to find the solution to the difficulties faced by visually challenged students.

Objectives:

- To understand the socio demographic conditions of visually challenged students.
- To find out the challenges faced by visually impaired students appearing for board examination.
- To find the solutions to cope up with the challenges faced by visually challenged students.

Research Design:

Explanatory Research Design was adopted by the researcher to explain the cause pertaining to the factor.

Universe:

This study was carried out in a particular school for the visually impaired. All the 15 students who were studying in 10thstd at a particular school for the visually challenged constitute the universe.

Census Method:

All the 15 students were included for the study.

Pilot Study:

The researcher found out the feasibility of conducting the study through interaction with the Students.

Pre-test:

A pre-test can be defined as a small study to test research tools,

data collection instruments, in preparation for a larger study. A pre-test is one of the important stages in a research project and is conducted to identify potential problem areas and deficiencies in the research instruments and protocol prior to implementation of the study. The Focused Group discussion script was validated by the expert.

Tools for Data Collection:

The researcher used Focused Group script as a method of data collection.

Method of Data Collection:

A focus group is a common qualitative research technique. The methodology adopted for the study was based on (Krueger and Casey, 2000) which stated that a minimum of 10 to 12 participants to be included in a single group.

Mary Goodyear (2013) gave Conative approach where the data is collected through group discussions and is treated as requiring analysis and interpretation. The Conative model is interpretive and humanistic approach to Focused Group Discussion in qualitative research. Conative method treats the collection of data as something that needs to be analysed and interpreted, whether it comes from structured or unstructured qualitative interviews or group discussions.

Elements/Factors	Focused Group
Format	Group
Age	<18 years
Length of each session	<35 to 45 minutes
Number of sessions	2
Participants	Fifteen 10 th std Students of a particular school for the visually impaired in Madurai
Nature of Setting	Circular group with casual discussion setting
Format of data	Conversation including non-verbal gestures
Data collection	Direct observation and Documentation
Moderator	Flexible, Focused and used focused group scripts
Documentation	Keen observation, selected statements and verbatim recording

In this present study visually impaired 10th std students, the researcher selected 15 respondents for this Focus Group Discussion. The consent of the participants and their willingness to participate in the research process were systematically done while adhering to the ethics and norms of the research.

Data Analysis and Interpretations:

The researcher selected 10th std students 15 respondents for this Focus Group Discussion. The consent of the participants and their willingness to participate in the research process were systematically done while adhering to the ethics and norms of the research.

The following procedure was used to conduct the current

investigation in this model:

Introduction: 5 minutes

The researcher welcomed the participants and gave an introduction at this point. She continued by outlining the conversation's main goal and the criteria utilised to choose the participants for focus group discussion. The introduction covered the outline of general ground rules and discussion standards, such as the significance of everyone speaking, the need for one person to speak at a time, and the need to be ready for the moderator to interrupt to ensure that they discuss the challenges they face in appearing for board examination.

Group Discussion-35 minutes

The group members were encouraged to talk about and express their views and interests in relation to the issues covered in the focused group script.

Focused Group Script

Focused Group method strives to produce good conversation on challenges faced by them in appearing for the board examination. It does not only consist of a set of questions but rather focused on a theme. The theme adopted here is based on the level of challenges faced by visually impaired students in a particular school for the visually impaired in Madurai.

Questions posed to the students – respondents:

1. How easily do you get good scribes for your exams?
2. Does your scribe understand all that you say and write as you desire to score high marks?
3. Do you find the exam duration given to you is sufficient for you to write all answers through your scribe?
4. Which section of the question paper do you find it difficult to write with the help of a scribe?
5. What are the challenges you face in dictating the answers, particularly Maths?
6. Why are you not able to recall the answers?
7. Why do you feel anxious about your scribe? Can you state the reason?
8. What are the other psychological challenges you face before appearing for board examination?
9. What are the emotions you experience before getting into your Exam hall and coming out of the exam hall?
10. How do you feel about the expectation of your teachers and parents?

Group discussion - Outcome:

Part 1:

The discussion on sociological aspect revealed that the majority of the respondents had frustrated feeling about the challenges they face in appearing for the board examination. They were finding it difficult to cope up with the question paper, scribe, exam duration and recalling the answers. Majority of the visually impaired students stated that they were finding it difficult to get along with scribes when they don't get their usual scribes. They said, *"When the arranged scribe doesnot turn up at the last moment and face challenges in getting another scribe, their anxiety increases, it puts us upset and minimizes our exam performance"*.

They found themselves helpless when they face adverse family situations like parents becoming sick or they become sick. They were saying that *"we become more anxious and restless about the happenings"*. *"Unlike other school students, we don't get special coaching outside the school teaching. So, our performances are limited"*.

Part 2:

The second part of the discussion was enhanced on psychological aspect, where the visually impaired students face challenges in appearing for board examination. They had more pessimistic thoughts in facing the board examination like having fear regarding scoring pass percentage and good marks. They were unable to revise again and again that led to loss of memory in recalling the answers. They had loss of memory as they were not using any mnemonics while studying. A respondent said, *"Appearing for board exam will be like climbing up a mountain experience for us"*. Another respondent said *"we are having less career guidance to aim for our future and decide our course of higher studies"*. All the respondents were having a negative attitude towards appearing for board examination and the marks they would score in it. The students were found to be less confident to appear for examination.

Closing Summary:

The moderator concluded the focussed group discussion and highlighted the major findings in order to justify the topic chosen for the study. They salient findings revealed that they were fearful and frustrated about so many challenges they face in appearing for Board Examination. Questions posed on sociological and psychological aspects enabled the researcher to understand the plight of the visually impaired students.

They needed constant motivation and career guidance in their life to think about life pessimistic and confident. They needed mnemonics and techniques to do well in Maths. They needed stress management and exam preparation for them as like other school students who appear for the board examination. They needed understanding and supportive family member with congenial atmosphere at home and at school that enables their learning interesting.

Salient Findings:

As an outcome of the focused group discussion, visually challenged students shared their exam difficulties. For each questions most of the students replied the same answer. In exam all the students referred one word to write. Sometimes they were facing difficulties to identify the answer. The students face more difficulties during the mathematics examinations. The visually challenged students spend less time to recall the answer. The students do not face any challenges to dictate the answer. The exam time for visually challenged students was enough to them. They faced more difficulties during the mathematics examination because for other subjects they memorized the theory but in mathematics exam they identify the formula and dictate the steps. All the students have the exam fear before the examination. The learning methodology is different from the normal students. For logical questions they face difficulties to find the answer.

Suggestions:

As an outcome of the focused group discussion, the researcher suggests

- Many revision tests that will help the students to recall in examinations better.
- For mathematics subject continuous practice will help the students to reduce their difficulties during exam.
- Night sleep is essential for a healthy mind and body in controlling their test anxiety.
- Mediation is one of the foremost tried and tested methods to reduce exam anxiety and stress
- Career guidance will help them in goal setting
- Teaching mnemonics will enhance their study skills and exam performances
- Motivation of teachers and parents by preparing them for board exams will help.

CONCLUSION

In this study conducted to know the challenges faced by visually impaired students at a particular school in Madurai, the researcher understood the psycho-social challenges and have provided suggestions for improved performances in the board examinations and to overcome challenges. This study helped the researcher to understand the plight of visually impaired students and to reason out their challenges in a scientific way, that is through Focused Group Discussion.

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